



US Army Corps
of Engineers®
Savannah District

Corps Officials to Hold Public Meetings on Drought Management, Lake Levels

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SAVANNAH, GA. -- The commander of the Savannah District, U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, Col. Edward J. Kertis, will host two public meetings in the upper Savannah River basin to discuss water management at Lakes Thurmond, Russell and Hartwell during the current drought conditions. The Corps' Savannah District manages the three reservoirs and the dams that form them.

The meetings will be held at the Julian Smith Casino, 2200 Broad Street, Augusta, Ga., on Nov. 13, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. and at the Hilton Garden Inn, 115 Destination Blvd., Anderson, S.C., on Nov. 14 from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. Colonel Kertis will make formal presentations at 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. at both venues. Representatives with various agencies including the National Weather Service (NWS) will staff information booths to provide information and discuss public concerns. This "drop in" format will allow information to be presented throughout the meeting so the public may come-and-go at their convenience.

Topics will include lake level predictions, water safety, water conservation management, hydropower production, and water management operation of the three lakes in the Savannah River system.

The three lakes entered Drought Contingency Level 2 on Aug. 15 resulting in limiting outflow from Thurmond Dam to a weekly average of 4,000 cubic feet per second (cfs). In recent weeks, the Corps water managers have reduced that amount to 3,800 to conserve more water in the lakes. Reducing outflow decreases the amount of electricity generated by the dams' power plants, but conserves more water in the reservoirs.

On Oct. 16 Lake Hartwell was at 650.4 feet above mean sea level (ft-msl), Lake Russell was at 475.5 ft-msl, and Lake Thurmond was at 319.5 ft-msl. Currently Hartwell inflow averages approximately one percent of normal inflow while Thurmond's inflow is about 26 percent of normal.

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Both Lakes Hartwell and Thurmond are 10 feet below guide curve and six feet down from the average (normal) pool elevation for this time of year. “Unfortunately, we expect the reservoirs to continue their decline,” said Jason Ward, a water control manager with the Corps. “Most streams in the Savannah River Basin with long term records are below five percentile flow levels and some gauges are setting new all time lows.” As a result of low inflow, he predicts the reservoirs’ levels to drop approximately one-half foot per week unless significant storms pass through the watershed. Under the current conditions and trends, Drought Level 3 would be reached in mid-December, requiring a further reduction from Thurmond Dam to a specified daily average release target of 3,800 cfs.

For more information on current lake levels and projections, contact the Savannah District Public Affairs Office at 912-652-5014/5279, or visit the District’s website at <http://water.sas.usace.army.mil> featuring updated links to drought management information.

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